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## Salam Watandar Becomes Independent Media Organization

**KABUL, AFGHANISTAN | APRIL 8, 2012** – Nine years after its establishment, Salam Watandar radio network was officially inaugurated today as a locally registered independent media organization. Deputy Minister of Information and Culture Mobarez Rashidi, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Mission Director Ken Yamashita, other Afghan and U.S. Government officials and media representatives participated in the inauguration ceremony at Salam Watandar Studios in Kabul.

“Up to this day, Salam Watandar received much of its funding from USAID. This event marks Salam Watandar’s independence as a media organization. This transition is a product of a phased plan for the long-term sustainability of the network,” said USAID Mission Director Ken Yamashita.

In acknowledging the importance of achieving financial independence, Chief Editor of Salam Watandar Najibullah Amiri said, “There will be many challenges ahead, but this step allows the staff at Salam Watandar to take ownership and truly call this radio their own.”

Salam Watandar radio network was established in 2003. Throughout its history, the network has vocalized and connected the voices and aspirations of its listeners from urban centers to rural areas across Afghanistan. Beginning as a small radio production service that provided content to a handful of independent and community radio stations, the network has grown to 47 radio stations that broadcast in 29 Afghan provinces with the capacity to reach over 10 million listeners. Through these partner stations, Salam Watandar broadcasts high-quality programs on current affairs, culture, social issues and sport, and has served as a strategic hub for mentoring and training its partner radio stations.

USAID assists Afghan media through equipment upgrades, hands-on training, business development, and strengthening of media industry institutions, networks, and associations to increase media professionalism and standards of practice. USAID also facilitates dialogue on media policy and regulatory framework in partnership with industry and the Government of Afghanistan, including direct technical advice on long-term media law and regulation strategy.

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